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# WITH A PARALLEL COORDINATE SYSTEM

#### FIELD OF THE INVENTION

This invention relates to shopping on a computer network. More specifically, the invention relates to the visualization and analysis of clickstream data from one or more online stores where clickstream data is visualized and analyzed by using an extended parallel coordinate system.

BUSINESS METHOD FOR VISUALLY ANALYZING CLICKSTREAM DATA

### **BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION**

Commerce over networks, particularly e-commerce over the Internet, has increased significantly over the past few years. Part of e-commerce enables users/customers to access information of products and to purchase them from various commercial Web sites (i.e. online stores). There are numerous online stores currently operating in the Internet including: Amazon.com, eToys.com, Buy.com, Wal-Mart.com, LLBean.com, and Macys.com. These online stores provide various customer services to make commerce activities possible over Web sites. Some of the examples of the basic services are catalogs of merchandise which are both browsable and searchable by various

	Application No.	Applicant(s)
Office Action Summary	10/761,823	BENCO ET AL.
	Examiner	Art Unit
	Stephen M. D'Agosta	2683
The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address Period for Reply		
A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.  - Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.  - If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.  - Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).		
Status		
<ol> <li>Responsive to communication(s) filed on <u>17 January 2006</u>.</li> <li>This action is FINAL. 2b) ☐ This action is non-final.</li> <li>Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under <i>Ex parte Quayle</i>, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.</li> </ol>		
Disposition of Claims		
<ul> <li>4)  Claim(s) 1-6 and 8-20 is/are pending in the application.</li> <li>4a) Of the above claim(s) is/are withdrawn from consideration.</li> <li>5)  Claim(s) is/are allowed.</li> <li>6)  Claim(s) 1-5, 8-13, 15-19 is/are rejected.</li> <li>7)  Claim(s) 6,14 and 20 is/are objected to.</li> <li>8)  Claim(s) are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.</li> </ul>		
Application Papers		
<ul> <li>9) The specification is objected to by the Examiner.</li> <li>10) The drawing(s) filed on is/are: a) accepted or b) objected to by the Examiner.  Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).  Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).</li> <li>11) The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.</li> </ul>		
Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119		
<ul> <li>12) Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).</li> <li>a) All b) Some * c) None of:</li> <li>1. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.</li> <li>2. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No</li> <li>3. Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).</li> <li>* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.</li> </ul>		
Attachment(s)  1) Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)  2) Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)  3) Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08)	4)  Interview Summary Paper No(s)/Mail Da 5)  Notice of Informal P	
Paper No(s)/Mail Date	6)	

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#### **DETAILED ACTION**

## Response to Arguments

- Applicant's arguments with respect to claim 1 have been considered but are most in view of the new ground(s) of rejection. New prior art has been applied.
- **2.** Applicant's arguments filed 1-17-2006 have been fully considered but they are not persuasive.
- a. The examiner has read the arguments, which stretch over 8 pages, and interprets them as arguing the non-amended independent claims. Much of the arguments state that a prima facie case has not been established and that the examiner has used hindsight. The examiner disagrees. First and foremost, the applicant's claims are broadly written and thus open to broad interpretation by the examiner. The examiner has pointed out specific column and line numbers where the prior art teaches/reads on the broad claim language. The applicant states:

"For example, it is only with hindsight of Applicant's invention that the Examiner would make an assumption that the user related information such as subscription information and configuration information also refers to the phone's attributes".

The examiner disagrees since the term "attribute" can be broadly interpreted to mean virtually "anything" which would be stored in the network (eg. HLR's user profile). The applicant is invited to amend the claim such that it more specifically defines their invention and does not read on the prior art. Therefore a prima facie case has been established and no hindsight reasoning has been used.

After further review, the examiner now <u>objected to claims 6, 14 and 20</u>. Claim
 has been cancelled.

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## Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negatived by the manner in which the invention was made.

<u>Claims 1-5, 8-13 and 15-19</u> rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over McCarthy and further in view of Kim and Staack.

As per claims 1, 10 and 16, McCarthy teaches a method for providing network support for an attribute feature for customization of mobile terminals by a telecommunication network (title, abstract), the method comprising the steps of:

sending at least one attribute request from the mobile terminal to the telecommunication network (figure 3 shows step of wireless terminal requesting download from WAP portal thru to Content Provider, steps #60-61);;

recognizing, by the telecommunication network, the attribute request from the mobile terminal (figure 3 shows steps #61-67 whereby network validates user account and item to be downloaded);

downloading, by the telecommunication network, the requested attribute to the mobile terminal (figure 3 shows steps #67-#70 whereby item is fetched and downloaded);

installing the attribute in the mobile terminal (figure 3, step 73 shows item being saved/stored on mobile device. Also see figures 4-6 and Para's 0003-0007 which teach downloading/storing ring tunes, tactile feedback, graphic icon, animation, background, etc.); and

## But is silent on

storing in an attribute database in the telecommunication network at least one attribute for use by at least one mobile terminal;

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storing in a subscriber database a data entry indicative of the mobile terminal being a subscriber of the attribute feature;

checking, upon receiving an attribute request, the subscriber database for the mobile terminal being a subscriber of the attribute feature of the telecom network;

retrieving, in response to the attribute request and in response to the mobile terminal being a subscriber of the attribute feature, the attribute from the attribute database; and

formatting future messages to the mobile terminal in a format consistent with the downloaded attribute.

McCarthy does teach checking to see if the selected item/attribute is available for download, checking to see if the user can pay and checking to see that memory is available to store the item/attribute (see figure 3). Hence one skilled would also provide a check to see what items/attributes the user already has loaded so as not to allow the user to pay for an item/attribute they already have stored on their phone. Figure 3 explicitly teaches updating the user's account (steps 70-71) which reads on updating the subscriber database.

Kim teaches a method for downloading a font to a cellular phone so that a user can easily change the existing font (abstract).

Staack teaches the HLR stores user profile/attribute information:

"...A user database 24 is provided. The user database contains user related information such as subscription information and configuration information. This can include user profiles and the home location register. In the embodiment shown in FIG. 2, the user database is shown as a single entity. ..."

(Para. 0022). The examiner interprets the user related information such as subscription information and configuration information as storing the phone's attributes as well.

It would have been obvious to one skilled in the art at the time of the invention to modify McCarthy, such that it stores in a subscriber database a data entry indicative of the mobile terminal being a subscriber of the attribute feature and checks upon

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receiving an attribute request, the subscriber database for the mobile terminal being a subscriber of the attribute feature of the telecommunication network and future messages are consistent with the attribute download, to provide means for only allowing the user to download items/attributes they don't have stored on their phone whereby all future messages are received in the new attribute's setting(s).

With further regard to claim 16, McCarthy teaches navigating through an attribute menu on the mobile terminal and selecting from the attribute menu at least one attribute to be requested (see figure 6 which shows a user navigating through attribute menus and selecting a ring tone to download) and a recognition module, upon receiving an attribute request, checking the subscriber database for the mobile terminal being a subscriber of the attribute feature of the telecommunication network, and outputting a confirmation message when the mobile terminal is a subscriber of the attribute feature (figure 3 shows checking if account is valid, and when verified, sending the item list to the user, which reads on a confirmation message since the item list will not be sent if the user's account is not verified).

As per **claim 2**, McCarthy teaches claim 1 wherein the method further comprises the steps of:

storing the at least one attribute in an attribute database in the telecommunication network (figure 3 shows a content provider #53 which stores the attributes in a database while figure 4 furthers this concept since it shows the user being able to select multiple tones 5.1, games 5.2, images 5.3); and

retrieving, in response to the attribute request, the attribute from the attribute database (figure 3 shows the user requesting and the system fetching/sending the selected attribute).

As per claim 3, McCarthy teaches claim 1 wherein the method further comprises receiving future messages to the mobile terminal in a format consistent with the downloaded attribute (figure 6 shows selecting/downloading ring tones whereby the user's phone would use said downloaded ring tone for future received messages, see

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6.3 which shows "Save and Activate" under "Tone Options") **but is silent on** receiving future messages in a format consistent with the downloaded attribute.

Kim teaches a method for downloading a font to a cellular phone so that a user can easily change the existing font (abstract).

It would have been obvious to one skilled in the art at the time of the invention to modify McCarthy, such that it receives future messages in a format consistent with the downloaded attribute, to provide means to download new settings to the cell phone (eg. attribute, ring tone, game, etc.).

As per claims 4-5, McCarthy teaches claim 1 wherein the attribute request/download is a request of a plurality of attributes in an attribute package (figure 4 shows the user can select from a listing of items to download, including tones, games, images, etc.. Figure 5 shows that the user can download and save an item, step #110, and then go back and request more items to download, see line from #110 to #101, which reads on the claim).

As per **claim 8**, McCarthy teaches claim 1 wherein the attribute an image (figure 4, section 5.3 shows that images can be selected) **but is silent on** one of background colors, foreground colors, font styles, font sizes, low-light level mode, and bright-light level mode.

McCarthy does teach downloading ring tunes, games, backgrounds for games, etc.. Hence one skilled would provide for downloading colors, fonts, low/bright level modes.

Kim teaches a method for downloading a font to a cellular phone so that a user can easily change the existing font (abstract).

It would have been obvious to one skilled in the art at the time of the invention to modify McCarthy, such that it is at least one of; background colors, foreground colors, font styles, font sizes, low-light level mode, and bright-light level mode, to provide means to download new settings to the cell phone (eg. attribute, ring tone, game, etc.).

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As per **claim 9,** McCarthy teaches claim 1 wherein the method further comprises the steps of:

navigating through an attribute menu on the mobile terminal and selecting from the attribute menu at least one attribute to be requested (see figure 6 which shows a user navigating through attribute menus and selecting a ring tone to download).

As per **claims 11 and 17**, McCarthy teaches claim 10/16 wherein the attribute an image (figure 4, section 5.3 shows that images can be selected) **but is silent on** one of background colors, foreground colors, font styles, font sizes, low-light level mode, and bright-light level mode.

McCarthy does teach downloading ring tunes, games, backgrounds for games, etc.. Hence one skilled would provide for downloading colors, fonts, low/bright level modes.

Kim teaches a method for downloading a font to a cellular phone so that a user can easily change the existing font (abstract).

It would have been obvious to one skilled in the art at the time of the invention to modify McCarthy, such that it is at least one of; background colors, foreground colors, font styles, font sizes, low-light level mode, and bright-light level mode, to provide means to download new settings to the cell phone (eg. attribute, ring tone, game, etc.).

As per claims 12-13 and 18-19, McCarthy teaches claim 1/16 wherein the attribute request/download is a request of a plurality of attributes in an attribute package (figure 4 shows the user can select from a listing of items to download, including tones, games, images, etc.. Figure 5 shows that the user can download and save an item, step #110, and then go back and request more items to download, see line from #110 to #101, which reads on the claim)

As per **claim 15**, McCarthy teaches claim 10 wherein the method further comprises the steps of:

navigating through an attribute menu on the mobile terminal and selecting from the attribute menu at least one attribute to be requested (see figure 6 which shows a user navigating through attribute menus and selecting a ring tone to download).

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## Allowable Subject Matter

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<u>Claims 6, 14 and 20</u> objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. These claims recite highly specific designs not found, either alone or in combination, in the prior art of record.

#### Conclusion

Applicant's amendment necessitated the new ground(s) of rejection presented in this Office action. Accordingly, **THIS ACTION IS MADE FINAL**. See MPEP § 706.07(a). Applicant is reminded of the extension of time policy as set forth in 37 CFR 1.136(a).

A shortened statutory period for reply to this final action is set to expire THREE MONTHS from the mailing date of this action. In the event a first reply is filed within TWO MONTHS of the mailing date of this final action and the advisory action is not mailed until after the end of the THREE-MONTH shortened statutory period, then the shortened statutory period will expire on the date the advisory action is mailed, and any extension fee pursuant to 37 CFR 1.136(a) will be calculated from the mailing date of the advisory action. In no event, however, will the statutory period for reply expire later than SIX MONTHS from the date of this final action.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Stephen M. D'Agosta whose telephone number is 571-272-7862. The examiner can normally be reached on M-F, 8am to 5pm.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Bill Trost can be reached on 571-272-7872. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see http://pair-direct.uspto.gov. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).

STEVE M. D'AGOSTA
PRIMARY EXAMINER
2-1-00

input and identifies products seen in each shopping step of each session (500) in the input. The output of the shopping step finder process (111) is referred to as micro-conversions (600) and, in this example, shows how many products seen in one shopping step are converted into the next shopping step.

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In a non-limiting example, one preferred group of shopping steps includes product impression (604), clickthrough (605), basket placement (606), and purchase (607) and will be described in detail in Figure 6 (600).

For a more detailed description of micro-conversion, refer to U.S. patent application number 09/238,861 to J. Lee, L. Morgenstern, M. Podlaseck, E. Schonberg, and D. Wood, entitled "A System and Method for Collecting and Analyzing Information About Content Requested in a Network (World Wide Web) Environment", filed on January 27, 1999 and U.S. patent application number 09/238,348 to J. Lee, L. Morgenstern, M. Podlaseck, E. Schonberg, and D. Wood, entitled "Aggregating and Analyzing Information about Content Requested in an E-Commerce Web Environment to Determine Conversion Rates", file on January 27, 1999.

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Finally, the visualization process (113) takes as input the micro-conversions (600) generated by the previous process (111) and generates as output one or more visualizations of shopping activities (800) in the online store by using a parallel coordinate system. The visualization process (113) plots the independent variable value on the respective axis for each request that has a matching axis in the parallel coordinate system. In a preferred embodiment, the visualization process also generates the polygonal line (using known techniques) to connect the plotted points

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on each of the respective axes. In alternative embodiments, the visualization process (113) plots lines of different types (e.g. different line thickness, color, type, etc.) to further sub-categorize the plotted features. For example, sessions started by different customer classes can be designated by different color lines. Sessions also can be categorized by other criteria such as the type of the visited online store, and the type and version of the used browser program and/or operating system.

See U.S. Patent Application number xxx entitled SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR VISUALLY ANALYZING CLICKSTREAM DATA WITH A PARALLEL COORDINATE SYSTEM, filed on the same day as this application, to Juhnyoung Lee et al., which is herein incorporated by reference in its entirety.

Figure 2 (200) is a flow chart of a preferred business process. The current invention which provides visualizations of shoppers' activities (800) in an online store (103) can be used by merchants of the online store to understand the effectiveness of their store and/or identify one or more bottlenecks of their store. The merchants can use this information to adjust their Web design and/or merchandising and marketing strategies to improve the performance of their store. The first step (202) of this business process starts with the Web server system (104) of the online store (103) recording all requests (106) from shoppers in its Web server log (400). Then (203), data stored in the Web server log (400) is periodically, say, daily, and/or on demand, retrieved for analysis. Next (204, 205 and 206, respectively), as explained earlier, the Web server log data (400) is processed by the sessionization process (109), the shopping step finder process (111),

and the visualization process (113) to generate one or more visualizations of shoppers' activities (800) in the online store (103).

In some preferred embodiments, the generated visualizations (800) typically come with various filters which business analysts can interactively use to select and/or deselect one or more groups of data for their needs. For example, the business analysts can identify where the store loses customers and how many customers are lost, understand the effectiveness of different merchandising tactics, and understand and compare the shopping behavior of different groups of shoppers, e.g., shoppers from different referrers (Web sites which lead the shopper to this online store), shoppers from different ISPs (Internet Service Providers), and/or shoppers who use different methods to find product information in the store (e.g., hierarchical browsing, keyword search, parametric search, and/or recommendations). The use of filters with the visualizations (800) will be described in detail in Figures 9 (900), 6 (600), and 6A (650).

Next (207), by examining the generated visualizations of shoppers' activities (800) in the online store (103), business analysts understand the effectiveness of their store and/or identify one or more problems with their store such as a broken link to promoted products, or a lengthy and cumbersome checkout process. Business analysts make recommendations for store improvement based their findings.

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By using the analysis results from the business analysts, marketers, merchandisers, and Web designers of the online store (103) develop and/or update their strategies for Web design, marketing and merchandising (208), and generate appropriate recommendations for the

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new/updated strategies. Finally (209), the recommendations from the Web designers, marketers and merchandisers are passed on to the Web programmers and administrators of the online store (103), who implement the recommended changes to the Web appearance and/or navigation paths of the online store (103) and other Web presentation of the store's marketing and merchandising efforts such as advertisement banners and other links in portal sites such as Yahoo!, AltaVista, Lycos, and Excite@Home.

Figure 3 (300) is an example of a prior art online store structure showing all the Web pages shoppers of the store (103) can request. They include Home page (301), Product category A (302), Product category B (303), Product P1 (304) which is promoted from the Home page (301), Search (305) and Search Result page (311), Product A1 (306) and A2 (307) which belong to product category A (302), Product B1 (308), B2 (309) and B3 (310) which belong to product category B (303), Shopping basket page (312), Purchase page (313), and Thank you page (315). An arrowhead line between two boxes in the figure mean that there a link from the source page to the destination page so that a shopper can directly access the destination page from the source page. That is, a Web page contains hyperlinks in it to all the destination pages which are accessible from this page. For example, Product P1 page (304) is directly accessible from Home page (301), but not from Product A1 page (306). Also, Home page (303) contains hyperlinks to four different Web pages, Product category A (302), Product category B (303), Product P1 (304), and Search page (305). Product P1 page (304) contains only one hyperlink to Basket page (312). Note that Search Result page (311) is a dynamic page whose content changes based on the keyword(s) used in the Search page (305). The Search Result page (311) can contain zero or more hyperlinks to product pages in addition to a hyperlink to Basket page (312).

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Figure 4 (400) is an example of a Web server log of an online store showing a number of requests (106) to an online store (103) whose structure was shown in Figure 3 (300). Each request comprises several attributes including timestamp (401), session ID (402), referrer (403), requested page (404), and links (405). Timestamp (401) is the system-generated time when the request was made to the Web server system (104). In this log data (400), requests are sorted by timestamp in an ascending order. Session ID (402) is a unique identification number for different sessions. As explained earlier, a session is a series of Web page requested by a shopper in a single visit. In this log data (400), there are three sessions whose ids are S1, S2 and S3. Requests from these three sessions are interleaved in the log by their timestamp. A referrer (403) is the Web page the shopper was on when he/she makes this request. For example, the referrer of the first request of session S1 (made at T1) is R1, an external Web page, while the referrer of the second request of S1 (made at T3) is Home page which was the current page (404) of the previous request. Links (405) are hyperlinks contained in the current page (404). For example, at T1, the links (405) of the current page (404), i.e., Home page (301) are Product category A (302), Product category B (303), Product P1 (304), and Search page (305). At T9, the links (405) of the current page (404), i.e., Search Result page (311) are hyperlinks to three product pages, i.e., A2 (307), B1 (308), and B2 (309) which are dynamically generated by the search function of the online store. The use of these links (405) in the server log (400) is novel.

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Figure 5 (500) is an example of sessions in an online store showing three sessions extracted from Web server log (400). The sessionization process (109) extracts sessions from requests (106) in Web server log (400) by using timestamp (401) and session ID (402). In this example, the process

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(109) extracts three sessions S1 (501), S2 (502) and S3 (503). The structure of each session is the same as that of Web server log (400) having timestamp (501), session ID (505), Referrer (506), current page (507) and links (508). The requests in each session is the same as those in Web server log (400) except they are now separated in different session tables, one table for each session.

Figure 6 (600) is an example of micro-conversions in an online store showing conversions of different sessions (i.e., shoppers) (500) among different shopping steps. The shopping step finder process (111) identifies products seen in each shopping step in consideration. One preferred group of shopping steps in online stores comprises the following four steps: product impression (the view of hyperlinks to a Web page presenting a product) (604), clickthrough (the click on the hyperlink and view the Web page of the product) (605), basket placement (the placement of the item in the shopping basket) (606), and purchase (the purchase of the item, i.e., completion of the transaction) (607). Micro-conversion means a shopper moving to a next shopping step for a product. In this example, the shopping step finder (111) generates one micro-conversion table for each of sessions S1 (601), S2 (602), and S3 (603). For example, S1 (601) has product impressions at five times, T1, T3, T10, T12, and T14. At T1, S1 sees an impression of P1. At T3, S1 sees impressions of A1 and A2. At T10, S1 sees an impression of P1. At T12, S1 sees impressions of B1, B2, and B3. At T14, again S1 sees impressions of B1, B2, and B3. Among these product impressions, only three are converted to clickthroughs, i.e., A1 at T3, B2 at T12, and B3 at T14. Then, two clickthroughs out of these three are converted to basket placements, Al and B3. Finally, both basket placements, i.e., Al and B3, are converted into purchases. The

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shopping step finder process (111) identifies micro-conversions of sessions S2 and S3 in a similar way, and generates the micro-conversion tables (600(b) and 600(c)).

Figure 6A (650) is a flow chart of a shopping step finder process (111). The process starts with two types of input: a set of requests in a session denoted as {R}, and a set of (shopping) steps, denoted as {S}, that the process will identify in the requests belongs to {R}. The elements of {S}, i.e., (shopping) steps, provide criteria for deciding if a request belongs to each of the steps. For example, a request in a session belongs to the step of product impressions (604) if the Web page of the request (507) contains one or more hyperlinks (508) to a product page. Also, a request belongs to the step of clickthroughs (605) if the current page of the request (507) is a product page. A request belongs to the step of basket placement (606) if the current page of the request (507) is a basket page. Finally, a request belongs to the step of purchase (607) if the current page of the request (507) is a purchase page.

The shopping step finder process (111 and 650) checks which request belongs to what step by using the decision criteria of each step (655). When the process finds a request belonging to a step, it tags the request as an element of the step (656). After going through this checking for every element in {R}, i.e., every request in the given session, for every step in {S}, the process outputs another set {C} whose elements Ci represent micro-conversions comprising one or more requests tagged as a particular step, Si, of {S} (659). The shopping step finder process (111 and 650) is executed for every session (500) to identify shopping steps of the sessions that will be visualized by a parallel coordinate system (113).

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Figure 7 (700) is an example of a prior art parallel coordinate system which was developed for displaying multivariate data sets to identify the relationship among the variables in the set. A parallel coordinate system (700) comprises a series of parallel lines (701, 702, 703, and 704) that are placed equidistantly. Each parallel axis is assigned a specific dependent variable (e.g., X (701), Y (702), Z (703) and W (704)) and dependent variable values (705) are plotted along the respective axis. The independent variable is represented by polygonal lines (706) which connect the corresponding dependent variable values (also referred to as data points) (705) and which illustrate a relationship between an independent variable and the dependent variables appearing on each axis.

Figure 8 (800) is an example of micro-conversion visualization with a parallel coordinate system. In this figure, each polygonal line represents a single session (501, 502 or 503) and its progression in an online store (103). The first parallel axis (801) represents a session categorizer, in this example, the initial referrer (506) of each session. There are two referrers in the figure, i.e., A (806) and B (807). The next four parallel axes represent shopping steps in an online store (103), i.e., product impression (802), clickthrough (803), basket placement (804), and purchase (805). For data points in the shopping step axes, timestamps of sessions are used. An advantage of using timestamps for data points is that because they are unique to individual sessions, no two sessions share the same data points in these axes. Using data points unique to individual sessions prevents the problem of overlaying lines between two parallel axes, which is serious in parallel coordinate visualizations, because it sometimes obscures the accuracy of visualizations. One disadvantage of using timestamps for data points is that they do not carry any sense of volume. Namely, the existence of a data point in a shopping step axis does not tell how many products were viewed.

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placed in basket, or purchased. Rather, it merely says that one or more products were viewed, placed or purchased.

In this figure, it is important to notice that some polygonal lines (808, 809, 810, 812, and 813) stop before they reach the last shopping step, i.e., purchase (805). The parallel coordinate system in this invention does not give a session a data point value for the next shopping step and beyond if the session does not convert to the next step. Hence, each polygonal line stops at the last step the session reached, which indicates the point the session leaves the store. This figure (800) shows that the number of lines connecting two adjacent parallel axes decreases, as polygonal lines go from left to right up to the purchase line (805). Dropouts of polygonal lines visualize where the store loses its customers.

Another note about this figure is that each polygonal line representing a session can be associated with one or more hyperlinks. Clicking on these hyperlinks brings up one or more Web pages providing more information about the associated session such as information about the session owner and products pursued in the session. This feature is referred to as hyperlink association.

Figure 9 (900) is an example of micro-conversion visualization with filters. The parallel coordinate system in this invention can have zero or more filters which help users interactively select and/or de-select one or more groups of sessions and customers in the visualizations. A filter can be also related with the first parallel axis (901) which is a session categorizer. In this figure, there are two filters, i.e., referrer (910) and product category (920). The referrer filter (910) has three values, referrers A, B and C. In this example, referrers A and B are selected, but C is not.

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This referrer filter is also represented with the first parallel axis and two values, A (906) and B (907), are displayed. All the sessions visualized in this parallel coordinate system come from either A or B Web site. Real-world examples of referrers of interest may include portal sites such as Yahoo!, AltaVista, Lycos, and Excite@Home. The product category filter has four values, and two values among them, Men's and Women's are selected. Namely, all the sessions visualized in this figure see products from either the Men's or Women's category. In order to distinguish sessions which see Men's products from those which see Women's products, the parallel coordinate system may use different colors to display polygonal lines. For example, it uses blue to display polygonal lines of sessions which see Men's products, while it uses red for sessions which see Women's products.

Figure 10 (1000) is an example of a session browsing more than one online store. When a shopper tries to find one or more products of interest either on the Internet or in the physical world, he/she often visits more than one store to browse and compare products sold in different stores. By aggregating Web server logs (400) from one or more online stores (103) with shoppers' session IDs commonly shared across multiple online stores, an extended sessionization process (109) can construct sessions browsing multiple online stores. In this figure (1000), a session denoted as S3 (1002), visits three stores, first, ST1, then, ST2, and finally, ST3 (1003). With the exception of the store column (1003), the session table (1000) contains the same attributes for sessions, i.e., timestamp (1001), session ID (1002), referrer (1004), current page (1005) and links (1006).

Figure 11 (1100) is an example of micro-conversions of a session browsing more than one online store. From the extended session table shown in Figure 10 (1000), an extended shopping step

finder process (111) can generate a micro-conversion table for a session visiting multiple online stores. This figure (1100) shows the product impressions (1101), clickthroughs (1102), basket placement (1103), and purchases (1104) of the session, S3, shown in Figure 10 (1000). Unlike the micro-conversion table for one online store (600), this table has store name, such as ST1, ST2, or ST3, in each data entry as well as timestamp and product name.

Figure 12 (1200) is an example of visualizing sessions visiting more than one online store. This figure visualizes the progression of two sessions, Session X (1210) and Session Y (1211), in four stores, Store 1 (1206), Store 2 (1207), Store 3 (1208), and Store 4 (1209). The first parallel axis (1201) in this parallel coordinate system uses store as the session categorizer. The next four axes (1202, 1203, 1204 and 1205) are the four shopping steps, i.e., product impressions, clickthroughs, basket placement and purchase, as before. Note that the data points in the shopping step axes are timestamps of the corresponding activities. The visualization illustrates that Session X (1210) first visited Store 1 (1206) but left the store at the clickthrough step (1212). Then it (1210) visited Store 2 (1207) and again left the store at the clickthrough step (1213). Then Session X (1210) visited Store 3 (1208) and purchased from the store (1215). On the other hand, Session Y (1211) first visited Store 2 and left the store at the basket placement step (1214). Then it (1211) visited Store 4 (1209) but left the store at the clickthrough step (1216). Finally, Session Y (1211) visited Store 1 (1206) and purchased from the store (1217).